2: Hutchinson E-4, 5 (1950-1951) 1987 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11

VILA RECÔNCAVO

[Town Life]

The majority of people in Group 1 live in the older part of Vila Recôncavo, often in the old colonial sobrados, and they rarely descend the hill to the part of town inhabited by the fishermen. Indeed, they mix little with people of the town, and there is almost no social life within the group itself. Parties are expensive, and visiting from house to house in the evening is not common. Vila Recôncavo has no such pastime as the evening walk in the square. This group is seldom united on anything, especially local politics; however, the more distant the question the more apt the group is to be of one mind.

Most families in this group send their children to school in Salvador, go there on holidays whenever possible, receive the city newspaper and the Diario Oficial,[2] and shop in the city as often as they can.

Vila Recôncavo differs in one respect from most other rural Brazilian communities: it has no parish priest. The mother church of the parish (matriz) has long been unable to support its own priest, and the duties which would normally fall to such a person are performed by the Franciscans, whose convent is in Vila Recôncavo. The priests remain within the convent, taking little or no part in the social life of the town.

It will be noted that there was no mention of a drug store in Vila Recôncavo. There was none until 1945, when a nonprofit organization, the Institute of Vila Recôncavo, was opened. This is a medical post supported by federal, state, municipal, and private funds; its director is Friar Innocence, a Franciscan lay brother. The institute is housed in the spacious old buildings of the extinct Third Order of Franciscans, and consists of a pharmacy, an infants' milk and soup distributing center, a maternity post, a dental post, and other medical facilities. The dentist, who has modern equipment, is competent in his work. For several years a doctor was in daily attendance, dividing his time between the institute and the petroleum workers' camp. As a result of a complicated local political conflict, he left the institute, however, and Friar Innocence arranged for a visiting doctor to come from Centro and spend two days a week in Vila Recôncavo. Three town girls were sent to Salvador to study nursing and midwifery, so there is competent medical assistance.

2. The Diario Oficial is the newspaper in which government laws and regulations are published. As a rule, it is the publication of a regulation which makes it become a law.

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462 days when their husbands cannot go. The wives of fishermen also have to cook meals at different times in the day for their husbands, who generally bring enough fish from the last catch for one or two meals. It is the woman who goes to the store for farina, coffee, beans, rice, and so on. Their evenings are usually spent at home sewing, making or mending a net either for their husbands or for someone else. If there is a samba they may go and watch but seldom stay long, but if there is a candomblé ceremony they may spend the whole night there, especially if they participate in it. In such a case they often take their children with them and put them to sleep in the house, or else put them on a bench to watch the proceedings.

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178 The institute has broken down the pattern of the practical midwife, known locally as parteira or curiosa, since one of the first things done when it opened in 1945 was to have several young girls trained in Salvador as midwives. Up to that time, however, there had only been older women, who through experience and sometimes through necessity had taken on the job of midwives. In the rural area the untrained midwife is still important, for the clinic has not yet made itself felt to

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[844] the majority of people living there. When the time comes for the birth of a child, a neighbor or perhaps a relative comes into the house to cook and clean and look after the other children, and occasionally to assist with the birth. The father continues his usual round of occupations, as most women put it, "earning enough to feed another mouth." In some cases the man helps with the housework when he is home, and there are several men in the town who are good cooks and who can look after the children. In other cases the midwife may stay several days in the house, doing all these things. Recently, however, as a result of the death of one midwife and the resignation of two trained ones of the institute, the other two have been so busy that they cannot spend much time in any one house. A common complaint because of this is that the midwife tries to hurry the birth, massaging the woman's abdomen, and frequently attempting to induce birth before the normal time.

759 The most popular midwife in town rarely has a chance to rest. She is in her seventies and is frequently in a state of exhaustion from caring for households where a birth has taken place. She sleeps there, usually on a grass mat since the mother occupies the only bed. She serves in the rural area also, as well as on the islands facing the town. Payment for

[Class C Families]

her services ranges anywhere from fifty cruzeiros to nothing but thanks, but with the understanding that when she is ill the family will help her, since she lives alone.

If a baptized child dies before it is seven years old, it is called an angel and goes straight to heaven, while if it dies before this age and is unbaptized, it is called a pagan and goes to limbo. The angel is carried through the streets in an open coffin, for everyone to see. The lid is put on the coffin after it is in the ground, whereupon all those in attendance scoop in some earth. The attitude toward the death of a child is one of mixed joy and sadness, and sometimes of joy only. If the mother and father wanted the child very badly, they feel sad; but otherwise the general attitude is that the child is better off dead, especially since he becomes an angel. The difference in the ringing of the church bells also shows this, for the ringing for a dead child is a short, almost joyous sound, while that for an adult is a long, sad tolling.

If it appears that a child is going to die after it has been born, an effort is made to have it baptized as soon as possible. But if it is healthy, it is baptized whenever the family can do so. The baptism includes a small party for the family and godparents. Formerly if a child died before it was baptized, its grave was sometimes baptized on the eve of São João by the woman who had been chosen to be its godmother. The family and godparents would go to the cemetery at midnight and gather around the grave, which the godmother sprinkled with water and baptized. This, however, is no longer done.

According to the parish records, 705 children were baptized in the county during 1950; 320 of those belonged to the community of Vila Recôncavo. The civil register, however, showed only 276 persons of all ages registered in the county for the same year. A child is seldom registered right after birth, or even at the time of baptism, but whenever the parents think of it. Sometimes a person must do it himself when, as an adult, he needs a registration certificate. The situation is changing gradually as life becomes more entangled in official red tape, and people are registering their children more frequently than they used to. Members of classes A and B are much more careful about this matter than are the lower classes.

According to law, the medical doctor must sign a death certificate before a permit to bury someone can be obtained, so the figures for deaths are more accurate than those for births. The civil register for the community of Vila Recôncavo

4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
SOll Bahia Brazilians SOll

gives evidence of definite personal worth, he will be accepted for what he is as an individual, and his racial antecedents will, at least to a considerable degree, be overlooked.

The extent of participation of the different ethnic units in the total life of the community may be indicated by analyzing racial participation in such institutions as exclusive clubs, schools, labor unions, and churches.

One of Bahia's most exclusive clubs, membership in which is definitely indicative of advanced social status, is composed of Bahian "society," including most of the leading officials and many of the more prominent citizens. Numerous receptions for visiting celebrities are held at this club, and its dances are considered to be among the principal social functions of the year. No blacks have yet been admitted, although several mixed-bloods, including a number of *brancos da Bahia* and even a few dark mulattoes, are regular and honored members. Whites, of course, predominate.

Among the members is a dark mixed-blood, with Caucasian hair and features, a prominent citizen, an able eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist trained in Europe, and husband of a white wife. Of him a Bahian of undiluted European descent once commented, "You know when I went to see him about my eyes the other day, I never once thought of him as colored. I needed professional advice and I simply recalled that he, like his father before him, was the best eye specialist in Bahia." Another member of this club is a dark mixed-blood, a wealthy exporter, prominent in Bahian commercial circles, and husband of a white wife, upon whose visits into the interior, it is said, all those with whom he has business dealings (including whites) feel deeply honored when he visits them in their homes.

5: Azevedo--42 D, Z-5 (1951)1953 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11
[Salvador]

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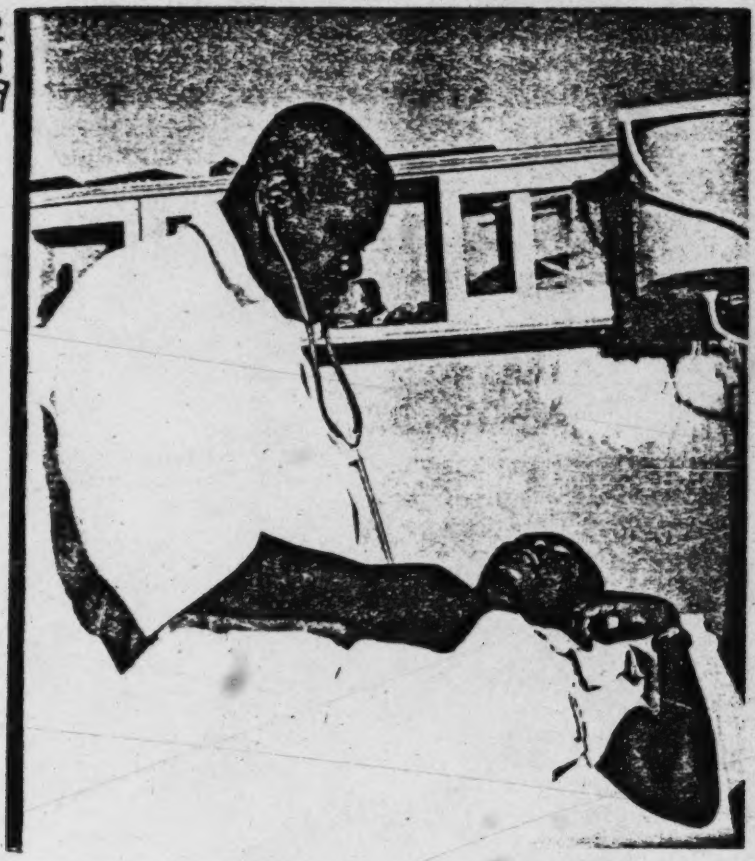

3. At the bedside of a sick person.

5: Azevedo--3 D, Z-5 (1951)1953 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11
[Salvador]

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4. Woman doctor from Salvador.

[SALVADOR]

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Professions	Total number	Percentage		
		Whites	Métis	Blacks
Lawyers	1,088	68.8	30	1.1
Civil engineers .	518	72.8	26.8	0.3
Physicians . . .	1,712	81.1	16.9	2
Pharmacists . .	173	82	14.4	3.6

*563 647 Men of all types occupy posts in public administrations and have management posts in them: they can reach the highest offices without having this provoke comments by their subordinates.

•[759] Some of the better physicians in Bahia have been colored men whose names are recalled with respect and gratitude. A dark mulatto, brother of a female informant, was classed in first place, along with two white colleagues, in a competition for an important technical post. According to other informants, however, the exclusions formerly suffered by the candidates for the posts of the magistracy were attributed to race prejudice. "One did not openly deny the merits of colored candidates, but in the classification they always figured in second or third rank, although they achieved excellent tests," one informant tells us, and he adds that a certain colored candidate, after having been approved, saw his appointment postponed on several repeated occasions. In spite of this, there are in the judicial magistracy numerous morenos and dark colored men occupying the positions of judges, prosecutors, and praetors. The highest tribunal of the State includes about one-third colored judges, some of whom have assumed the /83/ presidency of the court of appeals. Other positions connected with judiciary power are also filled by colored men, and it is the same for those of clerk of the court. The positions of notary, for example, very lucrative positions, are filled by persons of great prestige. Among the five notaries of the city one is fino white, of aristocratic family, and has already occupied important political posts, among them that of governor of the State; another, a very black Black, is very much appreciated for his moral qualities.

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*563 463 The proportion of colored persons in each liberal profession depends on various factors. In those that have the least prestige (agricultural engineers as compared to civil engineers, non-graduate lawyers as compared to graduate ones) this proportion is *563 larger. A very black student of medicine calls attention to the • 759 fact that the Blacks in general do not devote themselves to surgery: "Some take up this specialization, but end up by remaining in the general clinic. Odontology is not a good career for them either: what well-dressed white girl would wish to open her mouth *563 in front of a Black?" In the hospitals, physicians and attendants 758 of all types care for the sick, who are all gathered together ac- 759 cording to their maladies and according to their rank, and not ac- 743 cording to their color: in the private clinics that take patients of 565 the higher classes, everyone is admitted, provided that he can pay the price demanded.

*563 554 463 [301] The title of "doctor" and the marks of deference due a graduate are given without distinction to black or white persons who practice a liberal profession, which is why some of them have retained the habit of wearing on one of the fingers of the hand a "symbolic ring" of their profession, in order to be able to be identified and treated with the requisite consideration. Moreover, a Black may manifest the desire to practice a liberal profession without encountering hostility or scorn on the part of the Whites. In spite of this, some tens of years ago there were professors who humiliated a black student showing little intelligence or little industry, by saying "while so many people need a cook or laundress, there are Blacks who have presumed to become doctors." The author asked [124] the professors of a primary school of the State for permission to question its 93 most advanced students, of both sexes, about the careers that they wished to take up later. The percentage of replies received, according to sex and type, were: